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Public Safety Committee of the CT Legislature  
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Good afternoon Chairman Dargan and members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Denis McCarthy, Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director for the City of Norwalk and current President of the Connecticut Career Fire Chief's Association. On behalf of the CT Career Fire Chiefs representing all of the municipal career fire departments in the State of Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to address the proposed legislation consolidating the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) into the Department of Public Safety (DPS) as well as the merger of the Commission of Fire Prevention and Control with the Police Officers Standards and Training.

First, the Career Fire Chiefs recognize the severe financial challenges faced by the State of CT. They are significant and immediate. We acknowledge that to address these challenges the State must restructure and reorganize operations to become more cost effective and efficient. The Chiefs applaud the Governor and the legislature in addressing these challenges. The long-term viability of state as well as municipal services depends on

resolving the current state fiscal crisis.

In the event there is a merger and/or consolidation of DEMHS with a state agency or agencies it is important that the consolidation continue and advance the mission of DEMHS to meet the needs of the State and its communities through collaboration and coordination. DEMHS should assist communities to respond to the complex natural and manmade emergencies of our time. The Career Chiefs respectfully endorse a consolidation plan that extends the scope and reach of the Governors proposal by including additional agencies under DEMHS that have compatible functions and philosophies.

It is our belief that the Commission of Fire Prevention and Control, Police Officer Standards and Training, the Office of Education and Data Management, Office of Emergency Medical Services and the Office of Statewide Telecommunications make very good partners in a single agency. Each of these agencies and DEMHS are organized to provide services for and on behalf of local municipalities. Creating a single agency that includes these State offices will enhance their

ability to develop additional cost saving opportunities at the state and local levels. Such an organization follows the national response framework.

It is my experience and belief that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) is an inappropriate partner to continue and advance the mission of DEMHS. DPS has not developed an organization with local and state partners that supported collaboration and coordination. The DPS has not demonstrated willingness or desire to develop partnerships with local responders. It is the experience of Fire Chiefs and Emergency Management Directors that DPS has not reached out to community partners to create systems that bring together communities, departments and agencies that can apply and share resources to meet planning and response needs. Recently DPS developed a reverse 911 system ostensibly for local communities but did not include any municipal representative to develop solutions. When previously in charge of DEMHS, the DPS used federal grant opportunities to develop emergency response options and acquire resources that were never incorporated in a comprehensive state, regional or local plans. The resources were kept isolated in the DPS system negating any sharing or enhancement of interoperability or capacity. It is from this perspective and other examples that lead us to believe that it is not in the agency culture of DPS to manage the complex and diverse responsibilities of DEMHS.

DEMHS took over responsibility from DPS to create a comprehensive and collaborative disaster planning, response and recovery agency. DEMHS implemented efficiencies, including the use of civilian professionals, rather than sworn officers, who were better suited to work with local partners to develop comprehensive and integrated state/regional/local plans to address the needs of the state, first responders and residents. These civilians created working groups from all over the state and from all disciplines to create the 5 DEMHS regions. The regions have advanced the mission of emergency management and homeland security through collaborative use of time and talent that has been supported and guided by DEMHS. They have successfully secured millions of dollars in federal grants that directly benefit community planning and response capacity including the local Emergency Management Performance Grants.

DEMHS also supported and advanced the creation of two Urban Area Security Initiatives (UASI) in the Hartford and Bridgeport Regions. This initiative has brought in more than \$10 million dollars in grant funding for regional initiatives. In the Bridgeport Region, a first of its kind 700 megahertz mutual aid radio system has been created through UASI funding. This interoperable communication system addresses the primary deficiency cited in the 9/11 Commission report. DEMHS created the atmosphere that has made this and other programs successful beyond all expectations.

DEMHS coordinates with agencies and departments at the state and local level by including those agencies as part of the planning process. DEMHS has demonstrated that from the smallest towns to the largest cities the process is open, transparent and inclusive. There are agencies in state government that have services and philosophies that if merged with DEMHS would not only meet the financial objectives but would through the use of common training, community support and services would advance the missions of each of those agencies. Some options for this merger would include the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, the Police Officers Standards and Training, the Office of Emergency Medical Services, Office of Education and Data Management and the Office of Statewide Telecommunications. As you can imagine, these

agencies/departments have direct and daily contact in the local communities. Each has emergency response and training components that would tie together well with the mission of DEMHS

Thank you for your consideration of local input into the decisions relative to the restructuring of state government. It is our opinion that state government exists to meet the needs of the state and its communities. As we know, every disaster begins and ends with a local response, therefore the local response community should have a voice in this process.

Respectfully,  
Denis McCarthy  
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President, Connecticut Career Chief's Association